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BOSTON COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

Summary of Meeting on January 19, 1953

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Speaker: Jay Lovestone

Members Present:

Lawrence G. Brooks	Francis J. Lally
Stuart Debard	William R. Knox
Vincent T. Estabrook	Donovan Richardson
Hollis T. Gleason	James T. Mountz
Russell Harris	Henry Parkman
Louis J. Hunter	Walter Powers
Raymond B. Johnson	Jerome Preston
Richard B. Johnson	Richard Wait

Guests:

Edward Page	David Scannell
John H. Mahoney	William Wood

The activities of the American Federation of Labor in international affairs are based on the following assumptions:

- (1) The United States is the most revolutionary country in the world.
- (2) The possibility for change by the people--by voluntary associations--is indicative of true democracy.
- (3) The American labor unions have the most to gain in the strength continuance of democracy. Such a democracy is contingent upon a free trade union movement.
- (4) The A. F. of L. is against any form--and the form changes--any variety of totalitarianism. All such governments threaten personnel liberty.

With these assumptions as a basis of activity, the A. F. of L. is at the present time most concerned with communistic totalitarianism. The form of totalitarianism which the A. F. of L. opposes depends strongly upon time and circumstances. The A. F. of L. has no preferences as to which totalitarianism to oppose, but it attempts to fight that form which is most dangerous at a given time. Communism is the most total and dangerous form at the present time, and is the one most suppressive of human freedom.

With these statements in mind, the A. F. of L. wants to see the Cold War settled without war. But it is the fear of the A. F. of L. that the Communists feel that war offers the only solution to the

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conflict of interests. To aid in the settlement of the Cold War in favor of the West--and indeed in the formulation of foreign policy in general--the A. F. of L. is convinced that independent organizations should be free, not only to propose policies to the governmental agencies, but also to carry out independent activities in foreign lands. Much can be done on an independent basis that cannot be done through governmental representation and/or instigation. Foreign affairs at the present time require vigorous volunteer action. Such action, when taken by the A. F. of L. or the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, in which the A. F. of L. is the largest affiliate, is contained by no rules of behavior, no tradition of methods, and no doctrinaire answers. In response to specific problems, the A. F. of L. practices trial and error, and unorthodox methods.

In general, however, three methods are used for contact in foreign lands, namely, representatives, publications, and correspondents. Perhaps the best example in recent times of action by a direct representative was the work of Irving Brown in Europe after the war. Starting in France at a time of high Communist strength, and later working in other European countries, Brown preached against Communistic maneuvers within the labor movement. Other representatives were sent on similar missions to Japan, China, and Indonesia. The immediate task of these representatives was to break up the World Federation of Trade Unions. The A. F. of L. took the initiative to split this organization in the face of very strong opposition, for in the post-war years the world trade unions were enjoying an illicit honeymoon with Communist trade unions. The A. F. of L. was the only group of importance outside the WFTU. The British trade unionists, under Bevin's leadership, were strongly in favor of cooperation with Communist unions. Against this strong inclination towards cooperation, the A. F. of L. developed the issue of slave labor in Russia and its satellites. This information was translated into 12 languages and made Communism and slave labor synonymous. (Incidentally, it took two years of pressure by the A. F. of L. on the State Department before it would introduce the slave labor issue in the United Nations Assembly.) At all events, the WFTU was cracked and the Independent Confederation of Free Trade Unions was created. This body now has representatives from 70 countries and a total of over 55 million members.

In the way of publications the A. F. of L. publishes in several languages the International Free Trade Union News. This publication gives a proper picture of the United States to other lands, particularly because it is not afraid to face controversial issues. For instance, admitted its unfortunate aspects, indicated the difficulties involved, and shown the progress made to solve it. Further, the News has not shirked from openly criticizing certain aspects of

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our foreign policy. At one time the A. F. of L. criticized General Clay's administration in Germany and was answered in a letter from the General. Both the criticism and Clay's reply were published in the News. This sort of open criticism and discussion encourages respect for American democracy abroad.

Correspondents are very important. They are the inside men in foreign lands who support the A. F. of L. and the ICFTU. Such correspondents are inside Communist China at the present time. They are in sympathy with the A. F. of L. ideals, propagate its information and also are a good source of information for the free labor movement. In China some of these correspondents are in strategic positions and are the real heroes behind the scenes of international politics.

In the field of foreign policy formulation, the A. F. of L. has taken strong stands on various issues during the post-war period. In this respect the relationship with the governmental agencies involved has sometimes been good, sometimes bad; usually it has been indifferent. The A. F. of L. has openly criticized aspects of the Marshall Plan and the plans for European Union. One year before the war broke out in Korea, the A. F. of L. "begged" for the maintenance by the United States of a 5,000-man token force in the Republic of Korea. As early as 1950, moreover, the A. F. of L. had raised the issue of Russian persecution of the Jews. These particular instances indicate both the timeliness and the accuracy of A. F. of L. research in international politics. Aside from the general Soviet threat, the real danger at the present time is the Communist maneuvers within the Left Socialists in Japan. The A. F. of L. is also bringing pressure upon the ICFTU to accept Christian trade unions and thus to encourage closer cooperation between Christian and Socialist trade unions.

But the A. F. of L. is only one organization in the United States. Many organizations are not yet devoting the proper amount of time to international affairs. The CIO has not been as interested in foreign affairs as has the A. F. of L. but it is now "coming along." All independent organizations should help to formulate foreign policy, both by pressure on the government and by independent action. We must not wait for the government. Many things must be done to force the government to see your side of the problem. Moreover, many tasks necessary to the successful defense of the American position at the present time cannot be accomplished through traditional and acceptable governmental methods. To do the job which independent organizations ought to be doing in foreign policy requires the creation of a central clearing house for international information. This should be organized by and be strictly

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for the use of, independent, volunteer organizations in the United States.

Discussion

1. How do you get information, for example, on the Russian slave labor?

Several sources were used in this investigation. Among these were (1) Poles who had been in Russia and seen or had been confined in labor camps; (2) Escaped Russian army officers, many of whom were associated with such camps; (3) Calculations based on the Russian budget; In China, where slave labor camps also exist--though they are not as well documented--similar sources are not as accessible or reliable. It is much more difficult to escape from China than from Russia. Some confessions, however, have been obtained. The information on Hungarian, Polish and Czech camps is very well documented.

2. What is the reasoning behind slave labor camps?

The basic raison d'etre is political. There is still a strong anti-Communist tendency in Russia. For instance, the use of the barrack system for slave labor in the center of industrial areas has the main purpose of terror. There is definitely something to build on in Russia. However, we must always distinguish between the people and the government. Stalin would not suppress for suppression only. Terror--of which slave labor is but one factor--is needed for political reasons.

3. What should be the policy of the United States in regard to China?

The answer to this is involved but definite. (1) Under no circumstances should Communist China be recognized. There are several reasons for this. First of all, such recognition would give China the leadership of all Asia. Secondly, with the resultant prestige for China, Communism would swamp Indonesia and the rest of the Far East. Thirdly, we cannot depend on Titoism. That phase of Communism was reached in China in 1927. (2) China should be subjected to an economic blockade. (3) Formosa should be developed completely to become a shining example in the Far East. (4) Work on the overseas Chinese, particularly in Southeast Asia. (5) Aid the underground and guerrilla forces in China on a volunteer basis. We should find ways to help; use unorthodox methods where necessary. Southeast China is vulnerable to such a program. (6) Tell the Chinese people what has happened to them under Russian influence. The hatred against Russia is very strong. Despite all that has been done to foster anti-American feeling in China, the United States is still the most popular foreign nation. (7) In general,

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for China, give no recognition, no economic aid, nothing that will tend to stabilize the regime. China cannot industrialize merely by Russian help. To help Chinese Communism is to help world Communism. We propose a strong policy against China in order to forestall consolidation long enough to allow the rest of Asia to move towards democracy. The overthrow of the Chinese Communists is possible and has to be accomplished. But this can only be done by the Chinese themselves. Chiang still has tremendous support in China.

4. What is the extent of anti-semitism in Russia?

Russian anti-semitism at the present time is of a peculiar type. Its two causes are international politics and the question of Stalin's successor. Molotov is still the logical choice to succeed Stalin. Beria and Malenkov are fighting one another--a typical technique of Stalin who likes to encourage mutual antagonism among his lieutenants. The latest purges and trials within Russia indicate a Party feud between Beria and Malenkov forces. Stalin himself is less anxious for a war than he was a year ago, but with his death war might be initiated as a method of uniting the nation to prevent Party strife. The key problem for Russia today is Germany. There the remnants of Nazism are Stalin's bait. In this respect, then, anti-semitism is an attempt to conquer Nazis.

5. Can Stalin distinguish between anti-semitism and anti-nationalities?

Yes. Anti-semitism is fairly popular in Russia. His claim is not a racial one but a claim against the loyalty of the Jew.

6. What activity can the A. F. of L. Free Trade Union Committee adopt in relation to the Middle East?

Those countries need (1) independence, (2) industrialization, and (3) an equitable distribution of land. If the United States government showed initiative and American independence of action, we would have a much higher standing among the peoples of the Middle East and, before long, the British and French would respect us more. For instance, in Iran, before the Anglo-Iranian dispute, discussions between Iranian trade union representatives and members of the ICFTU had reached a general compromise on the nationalization of oil in Iran. The British trade unions balked on the establishment of a fund for training Iranians to run their own wells and refineries. The United States State Department subsequently backed the British position and we lost rapport with the Iranians.

In general, the A. F. of L. supports higher wages and better living standards in this area. We support this both for humanitarian reasons and in the interest of maintaining American living standards. Otherwise, the A. F. of L. has found that a definite

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policy, even against the position taken by our friends and allies, is more successful in the end than a compromising policy which displeases both sides. The United States, and Americans as a group, is too much obsessed with the fear of controlling and directing other people; we are even afraid to suggest courses of action to other people. The A. F. of L. position on Tunisia was not popular with French labor, but in the end this has not hurt the A. F. of L. relationship with the French. They now have higher respect for American labor not because the A. F. of L. refused to support the French position but because, in doing so, the A. F. of L. took a stand independent of the United States government. The policy of the State Department in Tunisia was based on the necessity of political maneuvering; it lost ground for the United States throughout the Middle and Far East.

7. Is the A. F. of L. and the ICFTU in favor of a complete break with colonialism?

No. They support evolution towards independence. Africa needs reforms now but also a promise of eventual independence.

8. To what extent is ICFTU associated with nationalist movements?

This is a question of circumstance. For instance, there is no African program as such. It is a question of the place and the conditions. Many peoples cannot reasonably think of independence at the present time.

9. What are the "unorthodox" methods to which you referred earlier in your talk?

These are rather hard to explain. In the ICFTU we adopt methods to fit the occasion. The ICFTU of itself cannot go too far with unorthodox methods; friends can go very far. No orders are given by the ICFTU. The approach is generally to lead people to see their position as we see it; they then react to it in their own way. We usually do not discourage the methods which they choose, no matter how "unorthodox/".

10. Where did the United States have the initiative in the post-war period?

The best examples are the Marshall Plan and NATO. However, we are not outspoken enough in the Far and Near East. Our policy should be one of pushing harder against the opposition of others. We should speak out more confidently on our own, thoroughly thought-out opinions.

The only place where the United States made a mistake--and a definite mistake--was China. The defeat of the Chinese Nationalists was the greatest defeat for the West since the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. But we had already begun to lose China in World War I. We have been overly critical of such men as Rhee and Chiang in the Far East. They should be appraised in relation to their own element. We should always be careful not to allow the Communists to determine

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